

CP MEMBERS EXCHANGE OPINIONS

(In our issue of March 11 we published a letter from "Argus," a member of the Communist Party. While expressing agreement with the criticisms of the CP program made by the Militant, the letter took issue with certain aspects of the analysis of the CP national convention contained in the reports on the convention by Harry Ring. At the time of publication of the "Argus" letter we invited further comment from our readers. The letters below were received shortly afterward. We regret that problems of space caused delay in their publication. — Ed.)

Real Leaders Are in the Ranks

Editor, The Militant:

Like Comrade Argus I am a member of the Communist Party and have been for many years and like him I am deeply concerned with the future of that organization. But I do not agree with his criticism of Harry Ring's articles on the CP convention.

In the first place, I think it is particularly important for those of us who have been in the CP for any length of time to be especially watchful for remnants of the superficial type of thinking which was so encouraged in the CP and in fact was the only type of thinking allowed by it. I constantly catch myself relapsing into the old habits which are not easily thrown off after twenty years.

INCONSISTENCY

I cannot reconcile the characterization of Foster as "the left leg" of the same body "nourished by the social-democratic policy expressed in the draft resolution" with the disappointment expressed by Comrade Argus that Foster did not "organize and lead a counter-struggle to the mighty wave of revisionism and liquidation spearheaded by the Daily Worker staff and the New York State party and its allies in the National Committee."

It is precisely because Foster and Gates represent the same class-collaborationist tendency that Foster was incapable of organizing a struggle against Gates. And if Comrade Argus is correct in his implication that the real militants among the convention delegates relied on Foster and Weinstone to lead the fight against the revisionist forces of Gates, then, unfortunately, the militants beheaded themselves in advance.

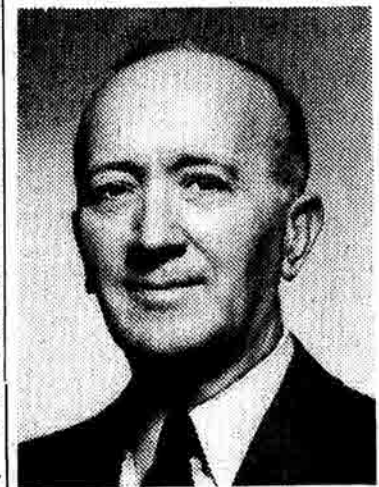
We must realize that the entire leadership of the CP in spite of any demagogic references to Marxism-Leninism is completely corrupted with ideas of maneuvering with sections of the capitalist class, as witness their complete agreement on "the anti-monopoly coalition," "peaceful coexistence" and the like. And we must stop looking for "lead-

ers" among the leadership of the CP and accept the idea that those of us among the rank and file who are class-conscious militants are now the real leaders of the CP, although we do not hold formal position as such.

If Comrade Argus feels that, had Foster prevailed at the convention, he would not have immediately proceeded with all of the bureaucratic means so well known to the CP to completely suppress any opposition to the line as laid down in Moscow, then Comrade Argus must be talking about a different Foster than the one I know.

A BETTER OUTCOME

To assume that Foster's crack-down, had he been victorious, would have been directed solely at the Gates faction and would



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not have been applied equally to the advocates of class struggle within the CP is to ignore the entire history of Stalinism and its continuing role within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. I am of the opinion that Harry Ring and the SWP are perfectly correct in their positive evaluation of the fact that the convention provided for continuing discussions within the CP and allowed much more latitude towards participation in forums, etc., with other left groups.

Because, in the last analysis, what are we after? I am sure that Harry Ring, the SWP, Comrade Argus and all other members of the CP who accept Marxism-Leninism and a policy of

class struggle are united in our desire to build a powerful, Marxist-Leninist organization in the United States. And I think we would all agree that the most immediate job in this direction is to re-educate the true militants in and around the Communist Party who have been misled for so many years. Is there any question that the atmosphere is more favorable for doing this than it would have been had Foster won control? I think not.

Comradely,
Phoenix

Experience In Northwest

Dear Comrade Argus,

I am writing through the generously offered discussion columns of the Militant, to express my complete agreement with the direction of your political orientation. I was very interested in your personal experiences and history in the Communist Party and concluded that you, like myself, a long-time "militant" in the Party, are making a fundamental re-evaluation since the events following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In a careful study of your letter, and of the articles by Harry Ring which you refer to, I find that I cannot agree with your main contention, however much I agree with your main conclusion and political direction.

I cannot accept your contention that there was no Foster faction. I believe this contention is refuted by the whole history of Foster's control of the Party, by what I have observed of the twists, turns, and then consolidation of the bureaucratic apparatus into the Foster camp here in the Northwest and by the factual material in your own letter as well.

FOSTER'S GAME

Down through the years, Foster's control of the Party has been based on his manipulation and exploitation of the Party activists (the "militants" described in your letter.) This manipulation was accompanied by an adroitness in "necessary" revisions of Marxist-Leninist "theory," and an excellent sense of timing.

This ability of Foster's enabled him to hold the leadership of activists while at the same time undermining the militancy of revolutionary socialism and the class struggle.

An excellent case in point is your own reference to the fact that the "anti-Gates" militants looked to, and hoped for a fight by Foster on the issues of the Party, Marxism-Leninism and democratic centralism. (At the very same time Foster was boasting in Political Affairs that he had authored "peaceful co-existence" and the "peaceful road to socialism" back in 1941.)

Let me turn to our experience here in the Pacific Northwest. In contrast to what you inform us happened in New York, there has not emerged here a clear-cut Gates' faction. Yet the main Gates' views on such issues as the pro-Democratic party orientation, dissolution of industrial sections and branches and the most social-democratic version of the "parliamentary road to socialism," were not only being accepted by the Party apparatus here, but were being carried out in practice even prior to the discussion! In other words, the Fosterites, in control of the organizational apparatus here, were carrying out a Gatesite version of the pre-convention draft resolution even before copies of it were in the hands of the ranks of the party.

AN EARLY DISCUSSION

But how could the Fosterites be carrying out a line whose authors they were castigating so sharply? There are two main reasons for this. First, prior to the Khrushchev revelations, the Gates faction had gained the initiative through the national discussion on bureaucracy. (True, this discussion was limited strictly to the confines of the "organization" question without any examination of its social and political roots.)

Then came the Khrushchev report, which greatly disturbed and demoralized the Fosterites. Their god — Stalin — had not only been tarred with the brush of bureaucracy, but also called a murderer! A retreat was in order. But to where? To the left? No! — The Fosterites can never retreat to the left. Even in the midst of the sharpest blasts from Gates, Weiss and Dennis, Foster would end by saying that "left-sectarianism is still the greatest danger."

Here lies the answer to the question you pose regarding the disappointment of the anti-Gates forces at Foster's failure to put up a fight on program. Why didn't Foster fight? Not because he didn't have a faction. Here in Washington, true enough, the most vocal of the Fosterites insist there is no Foster faction. This is a neces-

ary part of the legend of the faction. No faction struggles are allowed in the party — therefore we are not a faction. Because of this, many who are unaware of the maneuvers and closed sessions of the tightly-knit bureaucratic cliques really believe the claim that a faction doesn't exist.

THE GREATER DANGER

These are largely the members whom you refer to as the ones who "do not yet realize he (Foster) and Gates are only the left and right legs of the same body nourished by the social-democratic policy expressed in the draft resolution." But if they did realize they would be both anti-Foster and anti-Gates. More! They would have carried the fight on the convention floor against both Foster and Gates, but especially against Foster. Why? Because Foster and his group are the main danger. In my opinion, Comrade Ring correctly analyzed the main danger.

Actually, both the "left and right leg of the social-democratic body" are, and have been, nourished by Foster and the Foster faction, and beyond them, by Stalin and the bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union. Foster maintains the forms, the terminology, the shape of the organizational structure, the historical pictures; but all of them purged of their essence, "revised" and imposed by edict.

The program of Gates is the same as that of Foster. The Gates faction is merely out-Fostering Foster. But the militants in the Party will not follow Gates because he is clearly driving towards class collaboration. There is, however, no guarantee that these same militants will not fall back into the arms of Foster, dismayed as they were that he would not "fight." They have done it before. (I might point out that I have, too.)

Again, Comrade Argus, I want to convey my wholehearted, comradely appreciation for the opportunity to exchange my views and experiences with you. As you have noted, my appreciation is coupled with a readiness for a comradely exchange of differences. Along with you, I thank the Militant for opening its pages to us and all who live and struggle for the socialist cause. May the discussion and struggle become world-wide in the coming months.

Comradely yours,
A Northwest Communist